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EMAILED to PARENTS
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Madeira Families:

These are tough times on so many fronts. Just as we are working to deal with a national pandemic, we are confronted with an even more painful wound and the sad reality of a broken world torn with social injustice and shattered lives. I hardly know what to say and struggled to know if I should say anything, so please accept this as the honest reflection it is intended to be. As I have watched and learned more over the past several days, my heart grew heavy and I was reminded of Martin Luther King Jr.'s words, *"Our lives begin to end when we become silent about things that matter."*

I can only come to the conclusion that George Floyd mattered. Ahmaud Arbery mattered. Breonna Taylor mattered. Over the past few days we have seen an overflow of outrage in many of our cities around the nation including our own city of Cincinnati. The shocking public death of George Floyd, coming just after the shootings of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor cause many to grieve for their lost lives in the latest of a long string of similar cases. While I knew none of these people personally and each of these situations may have different specific details, it seemed wrong to be silent as at their root, each tragedy is tied to social injustice and the deep pain of racism.

Each of these victims along with others over the years are lives that are as important as yours and mine. Everyone has worth. Everyone has value. Everyone should be included. Racism in America, established in slavery, refined by Jim Crow laws, and perpetuated by the established means of discrimination, promotes hatred in our country and world that is in so much need of the opposite. Many of us do not have to worry when we go out and we take for granted that our rights are defended and our safety is secure. For our friends, sisters and brothers and even students from diverse backgrounds, this is not always the case as they endure snickers, sneers, jokes and in the worst of instances, egregious acts of violence for no other reason than the color of their skin.

In my opinion, our work begins now and is needed more than ever. I've had the opportunity to connect with our Global Classroom Committee who over the past two years has helped us to start the difficult conversations of social injustice and discrimination that are so hard to tackle. So while we all process what is happening in our country, I trust that we can come together as a community and recognize that if anything is to change, it starts with me. It starts with you. It starts with each of us looking more intently at our hearts to challenge our fears, and work to find ways to educate ourselves and our students about some simple steps we can take to believe in others, listen to understand, respect and celebrate differences, and how we can be more inclusive to our students and families from different backgrounds, races, and religions. We simply can no longer be silent when bigotry and hatred is present among us for the sole purpose to cause pain, hurt and divisiveness.

These are tough times for sure. Thanks for committing with me to be better tomorrow than we are today in the areas of social injustice, equity, and inclusion as we strive to positively influence our Madeira schools, our community, our state, and this nation.

Kenji Matsudo, Superintendent

"A school community where learning is personalized and success is ensured"